World War II Primary Sources

**(Letter from William Czako—an American serviceman at Pearl Harbor)**

December 7, 1941

Pearl Harbor, JH

U.S.S. New Orleans

Dear Sis:

It is now 9:05 Sunday morning and we’ve been bombed now for over an hour.

Our anti aircraft guns are yammering and every so often a bomb strikes so close as to rock this ship. Again a bomb. We’re helpless down here in the Forward Engine Room because our main engines are all tore down. We’re trying to get underway if possible. We were just struck by a bomb near the bow. We’re fighting back as much as possible because we have no power to load our guns, no power circuits to fire them. It is all being done by hand. This seems to you like a nonchalant letter but it’s the straight dope. There is only a handful of us down here as most of our men are ashore on Liberty. They really caught us sleeping this time. For a ship being in a Navy Yard for overhaul, we’re putting up a good fight. The first officer has come down here now to take charge. We’ve lit off all the boilers that are not out of commission and are trying to get underway so that we will not be altogether helpless by laying alongside the dock and be a stationary target. Those bombs are getting closer….

The firing of the guns have abated somewhat but we’ve received orders to get underway as quickly as steam can be raised. The firing has continued. Wave after wave of bombers must be coming….We’ve been struck several times now but fortunately there are no casualties as yet. It seems funny to be writing like this when it may be your last. I’ve never figured it to be like this. The next bomb may be our last but I will keep writing until I am told to stop or am given another job. Some battleships that are tied up to the piers near the Fleet Air Base are reported to be afire. It seems that the airbase was their first objective and the battleships were just too close to that field. We were really caught short this time. …There is another lull and only sporadic bursts from our pom poms. Preparations to get underway are still continuing. It seems impossible with all that machinery tore up but still we’ll do what we can. The order has come now to secure from general quarters. We were under fire for nearly two hours and I’m going to sneak up to topside to see what happened –

[**http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/battlelines/chapter4/chapter4\_6a.html**](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/collection/battlelines/chapter4/chapter4_6a.html)

**World War II Pearl Harbor News**

Four Waves, Start At 7:55, Oahu Hit In Many Places  
BULLETIN  
By The Associated Press

TOKYO, Dec. 7--Imperial headquarters announced at   
6 o;clock tonight that Japan had entered a state of war  
with the United States and Great Britain in the western  
Pacific from dawn today.

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Honolulu and Oahu came through a baptism  
of fire today with calm and determination as  
wave after wave of Japanese bombers rained  
missles all over the island.  
At 3 this afternoon army, navy, the police and  
various civilian agencies were on a war footing,  
and faced possible further attacks with un-  
daunted vigor and courage.  
At 3 p. m. the police reported that, based on  
Information from the city emergency hospital  
and the morgue there are 25 known dead and  
56 known injured in the bombing raids.  
In Washington President Roosevelt an-  
nounced that the raids were by Japanese bomb-  
ers.  
A United Press dispatch at 3 this afternoon  
said that estimates given out at Washington  
are that 400 are dead and 300 injured of the  
army forces on Oahu alone.  
Japanese raiding planes struck hardest at  
the army and navy bases, but the city of Hono-  
lulu itself suffered severe damage.  
Deaths on Oahu are reported at more than  
400, counting army and civilian fatalities.  
Navy casualties have not been announced.  
Estimate of the army deaths was given out in  
a White House statement at Washington to-  
Night.

[**http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~keller/news/work/index.html**](http://freepages.history.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~keller/news/work/index.html)

**Excerpts: Roosevelt Requests a Declaration of War, Dec. 8, 1941**

“Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives:

Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation, and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.…

The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense, that always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people, in their righteous might, will win through to absolute victory….

With confidence in our armed forces, with the unbounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph...

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.”

<http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/fdr-infamy.htm>